

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF ST. LOUIS COUNTY, MISSOURI
21ST JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

MUNICIPAL DIVISION – THE CITY OF Normandy

MUNICIPAL COURT OPERATING ORDER #2
OPEN ACCESS TO COURT SESSIONS AND RELATED ORDERS

Effective Date: 6-30-14

GENERAL ORDERS

I. GENERAL RULE.

A. Except as limited in these General Orders, every session in this Court shall be public and every person may freely attend the same.¹

B. All Court personnel, including, but not limited to, prosecutors, Court administrators, bailiffs and police officers, shall abide by this General Rule, except for permitted limitations set forth in these General Orders.

II. EXCEPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS TO THE ABOVE GENERAL RULE.

A. Disruptive Persons.

If any person attending a Court session shall become disruptive in any manner, including, but not limited to, talking in anything other than a respectful whisper, creating other noise, not remaining seated, or in any other way becoming disruptive as observed by the Court personnel, that person shall be first cautioned by Court personnel, and if the offensive conduct is not immediately corrected, removed from the Courtroom. The name of any defendant associated with the disruptive person shall be recorded. The defendant may be allowed to stay outside until the Judge permits re-entry to take up defendant's case.

B. Persons under the Clear Influence of Alcohol or Drugs.

If any person attending a court session shall appear to Court personnel be clearly under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, that person shall be, if a defendant, asked for his or her name and then be asked to leave the Courtroom. The defendant shall be asked to remain outside the Courtroom for determination by the Court whether to continue the matter or take

¹ 476.170 RSMo (2007)

other action. If the affected person is not a defendant or witness in a trial, that person shall be removed from the Courtroom.

C. Appropriate Attire.

When a person who desires to enter the Courtroom does not meet the Court Dress Code (attached as an appendix to these General Orders), Court personnel shall require that said person leave the Courtroom until such time as the person is appropriately dressed to meet the Code, or the Judge may continue the case upon request of the prosecutor or defendant.

D. Overcrowding in Violation of the Fire Code.

In the event of large attendance, bailiffs, police officers and other Court personnel shall count the persons present in the Courtroom and shall limit access so as not to be in violation of the Fire Code. The number of persons who may be present in the Courtroom without violation of the Fire Code is 98.

When it appears to the Court during any single Court session, that there will be more persons attempting to enter the Courtroom than are permitted under the Fire Code, then appropriate sections of the Court's plan as described in Article VII shall apply.

E. Children.

Unless present in Court as a defendant in a traffic case, persons under the age of seventeen (17) shall be accompanied by an adult. When a child becomes noisy or will not remain seated, the parents of that child will be asked to remove said child or children. The bailiff or police officer shall record the name of the defendant associated with the child, and ask that the defendant and children remain in the hallway or outside the Courtroom until their name is called on the docket. At such time as the defendant's name is called, the bailiff shall summon the family, including children, who may then enter the Courtroom for purposes of arraignment or other business with the Court.

The Court may exclude children if the nature of a matter being heard may be, in the Court's discretion, inappropriate to children.

The following language is permitted to be inserted on the Court website and, when appropriate, on Court correspondence, and on Court signage:

"It is strongly encouraged that children are not brought into the Courtroom. If children must be in the Courtroom, they must be well-behaved, quite, and must not disturb Court."

III. FACILITIES.

During trial sessions, the Courtroom shall be divided into a trial area and a spectator area. The trial area shall be separated from the spectator area by a railing, or a space if there be no railing. There shall be dedicated chairs for the prosecutor, for the defendant and for testifying witnesses.

IV. CLOSING OF THE COURTROOM.

Other than closure to those persons as set forth in Sections II.A. – II.E., if the Judge, prosecutor or defense counsel desires to close the Courtroom during any particular motion or trial, the Court will conduct a brief hearing on whether to enter an order to close the proceedings. Guidelines for such closure shall be as follows:

A. The proponent of closure must present a showing of a compelling interest for such closure and where that need is based upon a right other than accused right to a fair trial, the proponent must show a “serious and imminent threat” to that right.

B. Anyone present in the Courtroom when the closure motion is made, must be given an opportunity to object to the closure.

C. The proposed method for curtaining open access shall be in the least restrictive means available for protecting the threatened’s interest.

D. This Court will weigh the compelling interest of the proponent of closure and the public.

E. The order shall be no broader in its application or duration than necessary to serve its purpose.

V. RETENTION OF RIGHTS.

The Judge retains the right to post and enforce additional rules of conduct in order to maintain the integrity and decorum of the Courtroom.

VI. OTHER RULES.

A. Court personnel shall not refuse entry by any person, whether defendant or other person, except and unless such person shall be in violation of the Dress Code, is acting in an inappropriate manner, or if such entrance would violate the Fire Code. Court personnel shall have the right to ask persons entering the Courtroom if they are a defendant or visitor, but only for purposes of directing where to sit, or to mark a name off the docket. Court personnel shall have the right to check purses, camera bags, and similar items.

B. The Court’s website and general correspondence shall not state that certain persons are prevented from attending any session of Court, except there may be reference to discouragement of children in Court, and that those not in compliance with the Court Dress Code will not be admitted.

VII. [OPTIONAL LANGUAGE FOR THOSE COURTS WHICH NOW LIMIT ACCESS.]

[The Court adopts the following Plan to provide as much access as practicable in Court sessions during which there are anticipated to be more persons wishing to enter the Courtroom than the Fire Code permits.

A. The Court shall extend Court hours if a larger than normal crowd is expected to attend, by conducting arraignments, pleas, and trials, on dates other than on the arraignment night, and by beginning Court earlier than the normal starting time for pleas.

B. The Court shall permit pleas by mail, provided the defendant waives presence in the Court as required under MRCP 37.64(b).

C. The Court shall add additional Court nights for arraignments or trials.

D. The Court shall require the police and Court administrators to cooperate with the Court Plan to stagger Court appearance times as shown on tickets and summons on any particular Court night, and the Court administrator shall coordinate with police and housing officers to effectuate this Plan.

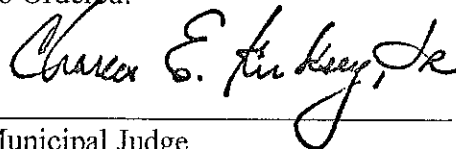
E. The Court shall permit those defendants who are accompanied by young children, or accompanied by observers, to remain outside the Courtroom until the defendant's case is called.

F. The Court administrator shall encourage those persons whose case is over to exit the Courtroom rapidly, but not require them to so exit.]

These General Orders shall be effective as above stated on the ____ day of _____, 2014, and are subject to amended orders as circumstances dictate.

Date: 6-30-14

So Ordered:



Municipal Judge

cc: Court Administrator
Prosecuting Attorney
City Attorney